



Donald G. James
Education Director

NASA Ames Research Center

I decide the way money is used in education programs, evaluate people's work, give speeches and present ideas to people. I also set the goals for the Ames education division and direct and support the people in the division toward achieving these goals.

Areas of expertise:

- Program management
- Communicating
- Writing
- Leadership

How I first became interested in this profession:

As a child, I went to airports with my father a lot and traveled often. I had a passion for airplanes and space. At NASA Ames, I was asked to become the head of the education department, and I thought it was a good opportunity, so I took it.

What helped prepare me for this job:

The best training I got for this job was from courses that have taught me about people. I learned how to resolve fights and disagreements, how to influence and to talk to people. Those skills are really important to have if you are a manager.

My role models or inspirations:

My parents have both been sources of inspiration for me. My mother, a school teacher, taught me to respect people. My father, a diplomat diplomat, taught me how to effectively communicate with people. (A diplomat is a person who works on relations with other countries.) I also look up to Jan Wrather, the vice president of public relations for an aerospace company, because she is a very successful African American and is the kind of person I want to be.

My education and training:

- B.A. in International Relations, University of Southern California
- M.A. in Economic Development, American University

My career path:

- Nine years in public affairs at the Goddard Space Flight Center
- Eight years as a project manager at the NASA Ames Research Center
- One and a half years as an executive manager at the NASA Ames Research Center

What I like about my job:

I love to represent NASA because it's so well respected. It gets a reaction from everyone when I tell them I work there. I've even been asked for an autograph! I also love working around incredibly smart people, and I enjoy the surprises I get everyday. It's never boring.

What I don't like about my job:

Because I'm the manager, I'm the first person to come to with problems. I have to deal with everybody's problems, and it takes up a lot of time.

My advice to anyone interested in this occupation:

Be patient. Be persistent, and learn how to get work done. Leadership skills are very important because you have to be able to convince people to do what you want them to do. Be willing to learn and do things outside of the ordinary!